ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME 6/9/65	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED000735	8179	N.A.

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S):
Freedman, Nervin B.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED:
Some Observations on Personality Development in College Women

6. Student Medicine

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TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

7. EDITOR(S):
N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. Vassar College
ST. Poughkeepsie, NY
CITY, STATE
TELE. EXT.
INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
Gannett Medical Clinic
Ithaca, N.Y.

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
8	228-245	Feb. 60	18

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA	15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR
	Report

16. INDEXING TERMS (8-12)

students	personality			
sex factors	adjustment			
undergraduate edu.				

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

An article directed to a discussion of the emotional growth of women during college years. The author describes the results of various indicative tests and draws inferences from the changes from the freshman to the senior year.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OR PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

R-6-21

8179

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ED000735

8179

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Reprinted from *Student Medicine*
February 1960, Volume 8, Number 3

Some Observations on Personality Development in College Women*

MERVIN B. FREEDMAN, PH.D., VASSAR COLLEGE

IN the last decade psychiatric services, largely in the form of some sort of psychotherapy or counseling, have become increasingly prominent on college and university campuses. Even the most dedicated of humanists on college faculties, who may consider social scientists to be manipulators of "guinea pigs" and psychiatrists to be individuals who adjust nonconformity and creativity out of their patients, are likely to regard a psychiatric section in the student health service as performing legitimate and useful services under certain circumstances. When students are obviously disturbed emotionally, so confused, depressed, or anxiety-ridden that they cannot pursue academic activities with any effectiveness, the great majority of members of college faculties and administrations are likely to be happy to refer them to a psychiatrist in the health service for appropriate aid. It is recognized that such cases call for some sort of professional activity beyond the competence of most educators.

But is this the limit to which psychiatric and psychological

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* Presented before the General Session, American College Health Association, Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, May 6, 1959.

The author wishes to thank Miss Josephine Gleason, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Vassar College, for a critical reading of the manuscript.

knowledge should be utilized on our campuses? Is the knowledge of personality development possessed by psychiatrists and psychologists of use to educators in some more direct way? Or should psychologists and psychiatrists consider that they can best serve the cause of education by treating individuals—students or perhaps faculty members—by helping to "lift" depressions, resolve conflicts, and generally aid in removing barriers to effective study and teaching?

This is a complex issue. We know that many educators look with jaundiced eyes upon pronouncements by psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of the relationships between psychological knowledge and the process of education. They have heard representatives of the psychological sciences talk about maturity, well-being, health, and the like; and even though this talk may interest them, they are likely to respond by saying that all this may be very well, but what has it to do with education. What have maturity, health, and so forth to do with the process of developing the intellect, training the mind, or inculcating knowledge of our cultural heritage? Teachers, after all, are not psychotherapists, and, accordingly, of what use to them are the concepts of psychology, psychiatry, or psychoanalysis?

This position was summed up very well by Joseph Wheelwright [1] in some remarks at last year's convention of the American College Health Association. Dr. Wheelwright suggested that mental health personnel should be wary about telling experienced educators and administrators how to run their show. In his view the indoctrination of educators is not a primary function of psychiatry. Dr. Wheelwright also contributed somewhat to our humility in these matters by pointing out that psychiatrists often have considerable difficulty, when they are called upon to define what they mean by such things as health and maturity. It is easier to say what these things are not rather than to say what they are.

Despite such words of caution, however, psychiatrists who work with college populations are not likely to be easily persuaded that they do not have something worth while to tell educators. Perhaps this point of view was very well stated in some remarks by Dana

[1] Panel on Role and Scope of Academic Faculty Advisers in a Mental Health Program, *Student Medicine, 7:* 67, 1958.

Farnsworth [2] at last year's convention. Dr. Farnsworth suggested that psychiatrists "can contribute to better teaching by enlarging faculty understanding of the teaching process along psychological and developmental lines." This is a forthright statement of a position. The psychiatrist can contribute to better teaching, not solely or primarily by means of clinical activities but by enlarging the scope of the educator, by providing him with knowledge about students which can be of value in the teaching process.

Yet, even though our sentiments are those of Dr. Farnsworth, we must admit to the experience observed by Dr. Wheelwright; that is, when called upon to present teachers with useful developmental or psychological knowledge of students, we are likely to have rather a difficult time. What is the cause of this difficulty? Is it a matter of lack of knowledge on our part of the essentials of personality or character change in college students? To some extent, yes, for as we know, only too well perhaps, development at ages seventeen to twenty-two has been much neglected by psychological theorists and research workers.

Despite the inadequacies of our knowledge of development in college students, however, I am of the opinion that the difficulties in rapprochement between psychology and education have more to do with uncertainties and confusion in the field of education than with the shortcomings of psychology. What is sorely needed is a discipline, a science, a profession of higher education. We need theories about how and why students change in college and researches that examine theories and hypotheses and put them to the test. We need formulations as to what kinds of institutions or teaching methods produce what sorts of changes in what kinds of students. These are the prime needs in higher education at this time. Without such systematic efforts to establish a science of higher education, I doubt that college education can be appreciably improved in the United States. I do not think that such measures as honors programs for exceptional students, a federal scholarship program, or higher salaries for faculties will do very much to improve the general quality of education, much as they may aid some individuals.

[2] Panel on Role and Scope of Academic Faculty Advisers in a Mental Health Program, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

In short, what is needed is a full-fledged science of higher education, a body of knowledge and a technology to be utilized in achieving certain ends. And, of course, psychology has much to contribute to such an endeavor. Not that a science of higher education would be limited in the main to the contributions of the psychological sciences. Knowledge of how students change in the college years and how institutions of higher education operate must, of necessity, be drawn from many fields—psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, education proper, sociology, anthropology, social work, and philosophy, for example.

In evolving such a body of knowledge, a logical place to start is with what is already known about personality change and general development in college students. And here we must confess that there is very little systematic knowledge. To be sure, quite a bit is known about the prediction of academic success on the basis of certain quantitative variables, such as background factors or scores on personality inventories. But studies of this kind tend to be circumscribed both in depth and complexity. Systematic knowledge of how students' personalities or characters do or do not change as they pass through college is indeed lacking. One has but to read a book like that of Philip Jacob's *Changing Values in College*,[3] an account of the research now available in the literature, to realize how little has been done. The majority of studies reported by Jacob describe measures of but one test or variable for fairly small samples of students.

A survey of the literature makes it clear that development at ages seventeen to twenty-two has received almost no attention. It is common practice for psychoanalysts who write of adolescence—Anna Freud [4] is a good example—to state that adolescence is the stepchild of psychoanalysis. The reference here is usually to early adolescence, that is, the years eleven or twelve to about sixteen. This being the case, the period of late adolescence must qualify as a kind of step stepchild.

One reason for the neglect of adolescent development has been

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[3] New York: Harper, 1957.

[4] *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (New York: International Universities Press, 1946); "Adolescence," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* (New York: International Universities Press, 1958).

the overweening importance ascribed to infancy or to early influences on personality. Viewed in this way adolescence is merely a recapitulation or resurgence of certain basic infantile conflicts. One deals with the conflicts or challenges of adolescence—for example, the increased vigor of sexual drives attendant upon the physical maturing of sex organs—in ways pretty much already determined by dispositions laid down in early childhood.

In the early days of psychiatric attention to the problems of education, this emphasis of psychology upon the early determinants of behavior in the life history was one of the factors that divided psychiatrists and educators. In those more naïve days, it was all too easy to categorize college students psychiatrically. There were the neurotic students, neurotic because of the persistence of infantile mechanisms in the personality, and there were the normal students. The neurotic students needed psychotherapy as well as education, and the normal students were to be helped by education to develop in the ways in which their nonneurotic solutions of infantile crises directed. Such a point of view, of course, troubled educators who were sure that events of the college years were of great emotional and intellectual importance in their own right and should not be viewed as mere unfoldings of powerful inner trends.

Current thinking in these matters has brought psychology and education much closer together. Psychoanalysts, such as Anna Freud and Erik Erikson,[5] have emphasized the importance of the adolescent period in personality development. Thus, Leo Spiegel,[6] a psychoanalyst who is interested in the problems of adolescence, has recently stated that we can no longer be satisfied with the simple conception that in adolescence the Oedipus complex is revived. The Committee on the College Student of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry has been busy of late evolving concepts that pay attention to the complexity and importance of the events of the college years. Psychologists, such as Robert White,[7] have emphasized events of the college years in case history material

[5] E. H. Erikson, "Growth and Crises of the 'Healthy Personality,'" in Clyde Kluckhohn, H. A. Murray, and David Schneider, eds., *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture* (2d ed., rev.; New York: Knopf, 1953), pp. 185–225.

[6] "Comments on the Psychoanalytic Psychology of Adolescence," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child.*

[7] *Lives in Progress* (New York: Dryden, 1952).

and in more general formulations about personality development. All this activity has brought dynamic psychology closer to what might be described as cognitive psychology. Cognitive psychologists have resembled educators in that they have stressed all along the importance of the thinking function or the intellect in personality, and have emphasized the influence of the intellect upon the emotional life rather than vice versa.

The time would seem to be ripe, then, for concerted and massive research efforts to determine the kinds of changes that take place in students during the college years and to illuminate the influences that have brought about these changes. We cannot, of course, underestimate the difficulties and complexities inherent in such research. Measuring and evaluating how students change, relating these changes to the influences of faculty members, other students, or family, describing the processes by which such influences affect students is a very large order indeed. But the difficulties are not at all insurmountable.

I should liken the situation of attempting to evolve a discipline of higher education to that of creating the discipline of psychotherapy. Surely no one can argue at this time that we understand very much about how talking or communicating with a psychotherapist helps people. Just as we have no empirical evidence that liberal education does whatever it is supposed to for college students, we have no unequivocal empirical evidence that psychotherapy really helps people. Although there is much to be found out, we do have a body of knowledge, some generalizations that guide us in treating people in psychotherapy. There are some criteria we may follow in selecting suitable candidates for training as psychotherapists, and there is certain information that may be taught them. The enormous complexities of human personality and relationships have not prevented the psychological sciences from carving out a field containing some systematic knowledge. Surely the field of higher education can be mapped in the same way.

The foregoing is by way of introducing the work at Vassar College of the Mellon Foundation for the Advancement of Education. Since 1952 these research activities of the Mellon Foundation have consisted of studies of present students and alumnae by means of tests and interviews. Our test battery has consisted of the following

tests or instruments, in some cases not used in their entirety: the California Psychological Inventory,[8] the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory,[9] the California Public Opinion Survey,[10] the Maslow Test for Dominance-Feeling in Women,[11] the Barron Inventory of Personal Philosophy,[12] the Franck Drawing Completion Test,[13] the LaForge-Suczek Adjective Check List,[14] and various figure preference tests devised by Harold Webster [15] and Frank Barron and George Welsh.[16] We had four concepts in mind in choosing our tests originally—intellectual functioning and achievement, authoritarianism and its opposite, masculinity-femininity, and psychological health versus psychopathology.

I should like now to report some of the differences between freshmen and seniors at Vassar College which we have observed on our tests. In this connection may I say that I shall be leaning heavily upon the work of Harold Webster in the account of test results to follow. This is a convenient place also to express my indebtedness to Nevitt Sanford, co-ordinator of the Mellon Foundation from 1952 to 1958, for aid with many of the formulations which appear in this paper.[17]

Let me begin the report of senior-freshmen differences by describing the Developmental Status Scale.[18] This is a scale of 123

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[8] H. G. Gough, *California Psychological Inventory* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1957).

[9] S. R. Hathaway and I. C. McKinley, *The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory* (rev. ed.; New York: Psychological Corp., 1943).

[10] T. W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswik, D. V. Levinson, and R. N. Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950).

[11] A. H. Maslow, A Test for Dominance-Feeling (Self-Esteem) in College Women, *J. Social Psychology, 12:* 255–270, 1940.

[12] F. Barron, *Inventory of Personal Philosophy* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1952).

[13] K. Franck and E. Rosen, A Projective Test of Masculinity-Femininity, *J. Consulting Psychology, 13:* 247–256, 1949.

[14] R. LaForge and R. F. Suczek, The Interpersonal Dimension of Personality: III. An Interpersonal Check List, *J. Personality, 24:* 94–112, 1955.

[15] H. Webster, "VC Figure Preference Test and Manual," Vassar College, Mary Conover Mellon Foundation, 1957 (mimeo.).

[16] F. Barron and G. S. Welsh, Artistic Perception as a Factor in Personality Style: Its Measurement by a Figure-Preference Test, *J. Psychology, 33:* 199–203, 1952.

[17] In addition to Drs. Webster and Sanford and the author, since 1953 the Mellon Foundation research staff has utilized the services of Donald Brown, John Bushnell, and Richard Young.

[18] H. Webster, Changes in Attitudes during College, *J. Ed. Psychology, 49:* 109–118, 1958.

items which discriminates seniors from freshmen on the basis of item analysis. In a sense these items may be thought of as representing development at Vassar from freshman to senior year. Hence the name. A sample of some of the items follows, the scoring *direction* (T, true; F, false) being that of the seniors: I have often gone against my parents' wishes (T); I set a high standard for myself and feel that others should do the same (F); it is annoying to listen to a lecturer who cannot seem to make up his mi nd about what he really believes (F); I would be uncomfortable if I accidentally went to a formal party in street clothes (F); it is a pretty callous person who does not feel love and gratitude toward his parents (F); I believe in a life hereafter (F).

Perhaps these few responses will give some notion of what the scale is like. We have studied the general content of the items and have classified them under the following rubrics: freedom from compulsiveness, flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity, impunitive attitudes toward people in general, critical attitudes toward authority (including parents or family, the state, organized religion, rules, and the like), intraception (that is, the dominance of feelings, fantasies, speculations, aspirations—an imaginative, subjective human outlook), mature interests, unconventionality of nonconformity, rejection of traditional feminine roles, freedom from cynicism toward people, and realism. A factor method was applied by Harold Webster to the total scale which produced two smaller scales of thirty-one and seventy-two items. The general factor in either scale we termed "rebellious independence." This plus an attitude of tolerance toward human weakness express the central themes of the scale.

Another scale which discriminates seniors from freshmen is one we have called the Impulse Expression Scale.[19] A sample of the 124 items which comprise the scale follows (again the direction of scoring is that of the seniors): I enjoy discarding the old and accepting the new (T); I like dramatics (T); I often act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think (T); I like to flirt (T); I have never done anything dangerous for the thrill of it (F). A rational clustering of the items of the scale after the fashion of

[19] N. Sanford, H. Webster, and M. Freedman, Impulse Expression as a Variable of Personality, *Psychological Monographs, 71* (whole No. 440), 21 pp., 1957.

the need scheme developed by Henry Murray [20] and his associates yields the following needs as indicative of the traits possessed by high scorers, or seniors as compared to freshmen: dominance, recognition, aggression, autonomy, acquisition, sex, exhibition, change, and excitance. As one would expect from the nature of the items or traits measured by both scales, the Vassar Developmental Scale and the Impulse Expression Scale are significantly correlated, the coefficient of correlation being .57.

We find that seniors are significantly lower than freshmen on measures of authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is a personality syndrome which has yet to be defined with precision but which nevertheless is predictive of behavior in a variety of situations. Among many traits that have appeared to be expressive of authoritarianism are compulsiveness, rigidity, intolerance of ambiguity, punitive morality, submission to power, conventionality, cynicism, and anti-intraception. We have two measures of authoritarianism. One is the standard scale developed by Nevitt Sanford [21] and his colleagues at the University of California, known as the F Scale, which contains expressions of social attitudes and ideology. Examples of such statements are: "Science has its place, but there are many important things that can never possibly be understood by the human mind" and "What this country needs most, more than laws and political programs, is a few courageous, tireless, devoted leaders in whom the people can put their faith." On this scale seniors score much lower than freshmen.

In addition to the F Scale we have developed another measure of authoritarian tendencies which we have called the Social Maturity Scale.[22] The Social Maturity Scale correlates around −.75 with the F Scale. Unlike the items of the F Scale, those of the Social Maturity Scale tend not to have ideological content. Among the 149 items comprising the scale are the following (the responses are those of the senior class, the scoring direction being that of less authoritarian tendency): Once I have my mind made up I seldom

[20] H. A. Murray, *Explorations in Personality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938).

[21] T. W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswick, D. V. Levinson, and R. N. Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950).

[22] H. Webster, N. Sanford, and M. Freedman, A New Instrument for Studying Authoritarianism in Personality, *J. Psychology, 40:* 73–84, 1955.

change it (F); our thinking would be a lot better off if we would u st forget about words like "probably," "approximately," and "perhaps," (F); parents are much too easy on their children nowadays (F); most people make friends because friends are likely to be useful to them (F); a strong person doesn't show his emotions and feelings (F); a person does not need to worry about other people if only he looks after himself (F). The Social Maturity Scale correlates .64 with the Vassar Developmental Scale and .21 with the Impulse Expression Scale.

I should like to say something now on the subject of senior-freshman differences on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. This inventory was designed to measure the type and extent or degree of psychopathological tendencies. The inventory yields scores on nine clinical scales; for example, there are scales measuring tendencies toward hypochondriasis, depression, schizophrenia, and paranoia. There are also four validating scales, so called, which shed light on the extent to which the test results may be regarded as valid or invalid for one reason or another and which are useful adjunctive devices in interpreting scores on the clinical scales proper.

The trend is for seniors to be higher than freshmen on most of the clinical scales. Thus, they are higher on the following scales: hypochondriasis, depression, hysteria, psychopathic deviate, schizophrenia, and mania. I use the term "trend" advisedly, because the differences are just that. They tend to be small and to be of only marginal statistical significance in the case of comparisons between individual classes. The consistency of the trend over a period of years is such that the differences attain significance, however. In short, seniors may be regarded as subscribing somewhat more frequently than freshmen to statements indicating psychological or physical disturbance or instability.

Thus, we see that substantial personality change takes place between freshman and senior year at Vassar College. Seniors are higher than freshmen on the Developmental Status Scale and the Impulse Expression Scale and lower on measures of authoritarianism. They also display a slight tendency toward greater emotional instability. Seniors may then be thought of as less conventional than freshmen, more critical of authority, more aware of sexual

and aggressive needs, more attuned to their inner lives—to mention some of the traits measured by these tests.

Before going on to discuss the meaning or theoretical import of these test findings, I should like to address myself very briefly to two relevant matters. One is the question of the degree to which these results, based as they are on students at one college, may be regarded as generalizable to many if not most college women. And the second has to do with the timing of the senior-freshman changes. Do the changes between freshman and senior year take place at a fairly constant rate each year—are they linear for the four-year period—or are there periods or years of maximum acceleration, when change is greatest?

We have some information bearing on the representativeness of the changes we observe in Vassar students between senior and freshman year. Our tests have been given to students at a variety of women's colleges, a liberal arts college in the Near East, a Negro college in the South, a Catholic college in Canada, and an Eastern women's college somewhat different in curriculum and organization from Vassar. In all cases the same kinds of trends obtain as the ones we find at Vassar. As one would expect, in some cases the differences in means on the various scales are great, the students at other schools being much higher or lower. But whatever the original freshman mean scores, the tendencies are the same. The students at these other colleges change between freshman and senior years in the same directions as do Vassar students.

I should mention here that I am talking about findings on our Developmental Status Scale, the Impulse Expression Scale, and the Social Maturity Scale. We do not have Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory scores for these other colleges. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory profiles of Vassar students, however, are similar to those reported in the literature for college women generally.

Thus, one may hypothesize that these trends are characteristic of many women in this age range, or at least college women. One would hope that studies of this kind would be carried on with women who do not go on from high school to college. Such studies would help in evaluating the extent to which the changes we ob-

serve in college students are a function of their situation as college women and are not relatively universal for that age range.

As for the question of the timing of these observed changes, there is evidence that they come about fairly early in the college career, for the most part within the first two years. Scores obtained at the end of the sophomore year approach senior scores fairly closely. As I indicated earlier, however, this study is still in process and only tentative conclusions are justified. Should these preliminary test results hold up with further sampling, I should still be inclined not to think of this as an indication that little or no personality change takes place after sophomore year. Rather I should consider this to be more an indication of inadequacy or lack of sensitivity in our tests. I believe that much development goes on after the sophomore year, and I believe that study or analysis of our interview data will bear this out.

I should like to spend a few moments now considering the theoretical import of our test findings. They demonstrate rather clearly, I believe, what psychiatrists and psychologists working in student health services have probably known or suspected all along—that is, that there are systematic personality changes going on during the period of seventeen or eighteen to twenty years of age and later. Development in late adolescence is not simply a matter of progression along lines laid down in early adolescence or perhaps even in infancy. This is not to say, of course, that one may consider the developmental trends of late adolescence to be independent of early adolescence and infancy. Obviously, an individual or an individual personality is all of a piece, and what happens in late adolescence is very much a function of earlier occurrences. But what does seem clear is that late adolescence in women, at least in college women, is a period deserving of attention in its own right. It may be thought of as a developmental phase with certain regularities of problems or conflicts and certain systematic ways of meeting these. And it may well be that the developmental phase of late adolescence will prove to be as important for the adult personality as those of early adolescence and infancy.

Our findings are consonant with the studies of adolescent girls, in this case girls aged fourteen to sixteen, carried out by Elizabeth

Douvan [23] of the University of Michigan. I shall have more to say about Dr. Douvan's work in a moment in commenting on our interview studies, but I should like to quote the following sentence from her paper on character process in adolescence now. "I do think that in all likelihood feminine character develops later than masculine character, and that adolescence—the period we ordinarily consider *par excellence* the time for consolidation of character —is a more dramatic time for boys than for girls." Dr. Douvan is suggesting here the likelihood that in girls substantial personality or character change is likely to come after age sixteen. As will have been noted, she suggests also that character develops earlier in boys. One wonders then about the male equivalents of our findings. The Center for the Study of Higher Education of the University of California is now engaged in test and questionnaire studies of college men and women at a number of institutions. They are using measures quite similar to ours, and we may look forward soon to comparable results for men.

The changes we note in our test measures between freshman and senior year accord rather neatly with the standard psychoanalytic notions of the task or tasks of adolescence, or with the kinds of development in personality or character that are required by a new state of biological maturity and by considerable change in social and familial relationships. Thus, Leo Spiegel [24] says that adolescence begins around thirteen or fourteen in psychic dissolution and terminates in psychic consolidation in the years eighteen to twenty. I shall return to the term dissolution shortly, but what are the kinds of adjustments and eventual consolidations required?

We know that standard psychoanalytic theory has it that the biological changes of puberty are accompanied by a resurgence of instinctual forces. The sexual and aggressive drives of childhood, which have lain dormant, as it were, since infancy, are revived. The adolescent ego must find ways of dealing with these urges, adjustments which involve neither denial of their existence nor acting with abandon upon impulse. The test findings I have re-

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[23] E. Douvan, "Character Process in Adolescence," University of Michigan, 1957 (dittoed).

[24] L. A. Spiegel, "Comments on Psychoanalytic Psychology of Adolescence," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child.*

ported reveal that seniors display a considerably enlarged scope of awareness of aggressive and sexual feelings. Such attitudes form a prominent part of the Developmental Status Scale and, of course, they comprise the major content of the Impulse Expression Scale.

In order for these aggressive and sexual urges to be assimilated into the adolescent ego or into awareness, some change or softening, so to speak, is very likely required in the superego—the primitive agency of control. The situation in adolescence or adulthood in which a rigid superego has been maintained without modification has been likened to a society in which rules control people rather than vice versa. This change away from rigid superego functioning has been called the humanization of conscience by Robert White.[25] The term humanization implies, of course, the recognition that rules are man-made and should not be considered apart from awareness of the human condition. The freshmen-senior differences we have found, particularly those in the area of authoritarianism, reflect changes of this kind.

Increased awareness or acceptance of sexual and aggressive impulses and liberalization in superego functioning should not be interpreted to mean, of course, that the equivalent of deep-level psychoanalytic psychotherapy takes place during the college years. These processes are surely not comparable to the regression and emotional re-experiencing that are so essential to psychoanalytic psychotherapy which has as its aim major revisions of the structure of the personality.

Rather I think that these changes should be regarded, primarily, as a function of growth in the ego, that process of the personality or the psyche which guides, controls, and directs and which mediates between the inner world of the individual and his outer environment. Perhaps in this sense brief psychotherapy and college experience are not dissimilar. In each situation one hopes for growth and improvement in ego functioning. The ego, like any power or function, grows stronger with exercise. Growth in the ego is an integral part of most psychotherapies. Mild frustration and the absence of intense anxiety are likely to lead to "coping" operations and eventually to an increment of improved functioning in the ego.

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[25] *Lives in Progress* (New York: Dryden, 1952).

A college situation which allows for experimentation and which requires of students that they resolve conflicts, solve problems, assimilate new experiences is surely likely to enhance the ego's functioning. In 1936, Anna Freud [26] suggested that we might hope to gain as much knowledge of the ego from a study of adolescence as we have of the id from a study of childhood. This is still a hope, unrealized by our desultory researches in the adolescent period, but I daresay that the potential for increased knowledge of the ego's functioning noted by Miss Freud still remains.

I should like to make some comment now about our interview studies, although only briefly. What I wish to emphasize is the placidity of the adolescent period in our subjects. The period of early adolescence prior to college was not one characterized in a majority of cases by turmoil or "psychic dissolution," to return to Dr. Spiegel's term. Only a small minority of students described themselves as having experienced the kinds of troubling events we commonly associate with adolescence—doubt and guilt about sexual matters, violent mood swings, rejection of parents and the family, and the like. Most students reported relative ease in adjusting to the biological changes of puberty, and few described noteworthy conflict with parents. In fact, the most common difficulties or anxieties of the early adolescent period which were reported had to do with matters of social relations, chiefly problems of acceptance by other girls.

It did not seem to us that this phenomenon of taking early adolescence in stride was the consequence of rather massive repression or denial of difficulty. Of course, in matters involving retrospective accounts of earlier events, it is difficult to tell what actually did happen. Suffice it to say that in most cases the interviewers did not consider that the qualities of strong repressive tendencies, reaction formations, and the like were present. It was our opinion that the relatively uneventful early adolescences reported by our subjects were a fairly accurate picture of their actual experiences.

This view accords with that of Elizabeth Douvan. You recall the sentence I quoted earlier in which she voiced the opinion that adolescence was a more dramatic time for boys than for girls.

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[26] *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense.*

Girls, she believes, "are more likely to show an unquestioned identification with and acceptance of parental regulation. They less often distinguish parents' standards from their own—and they do not view the parents' rules as external or inhibiting as often as boys do."

The senior-freshmen differences we have found on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory indicate that perhaps personality development in the college years is accompanied by a measure of confusion and instability. The seniors do score higher than freshmen on most of the clinical scales of the inventory, and it may be that we are justified in concluding that some increase of neurotic symptomatology is the price seniors must pay for the enlargement of their scope and awareness. As I pointed out, however, the differences in scale scores between freshmen and seniors are small and do not justify a conclusion that substantial psychopathological tendency becomes prominent during the college years. The composite senior profile on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory falls well within the statistical bounds of normality, as defined by the average tendency of the general population, and our interview data do not support the view that the college years for most students are a period of marked psychological strife and disorder.

The relative smoothness and ease of adjustment in the adolescent period, at least in girls, noted by Dr. Douvan and ourselves, has also been observed by Joseph Stone and Joseph Church of the Child Study Department of Vassar College.[27] They wonder about the possible consequences of such trends. They ask, "Do these adolescents move smoothly and without stress into a true maturity, with a strength of identity equivalent to that forged in the over-assertiveness of 'adolescent rebellion,' or do they become docile, less differentiated, incomplete adults . . .?" This is a good question. According to Anna Freud [28] adolescence is by definition an interruption of peaceful growth. She is of the opinion that those adolescents who do not display some form of adolescent upset are the victims, as it were, of excessive defenses against drives. In her

[27] L. J. Stone and J. Church, *Childhood and Adolescence* (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 294.

[28] "Adolescence."

opinion, these adolescents, perhaps more than any others, are in need of help to remove inner restrictions so as to allow normal maturation. It would seem that much research will be needed before we understand enough of the relationships between complexity and maturity in the adult personality and discontinuity and conflict in development to answer the question raised by Drs. Stone and Church.

Before concluding I should like to say something of a study we are in the process of carrying out—a study involving comparisons on our test measures between students who voluntarily see the college psychiatrist and those who do not see the psychiatrist. Since our tests are administered to all entering freshmen, it is a relatively simple matter for us to carry out such comparisons.

The design of the study is as follows. For three different classes, those of 1959, 1958, and 1957, Robert Nixon, Mellon Foundation psychiatrist, furnished the research staff with the names of those students who had voluntarily sought psychiatric aid and who had had at least four therapeutic contacts. Four interviews were considered to be some sort of rule of thumb index of commitment to psychotherapy. The criterion of self-referral not only rules out students who may be seeing the psychiatrist somewhat under duress, as it were, but also some of those students with a sufficient degree of manifest psychopathology to come to the attention of members of the faculty or administration, thereby leading to a referral. The question then may be phrased somewhat as follows. What are the characteristics, as revealed by tests of entering freshmen, which differentiate those students who voluntarily seek psychiatric help at some later date and who remain for four or more interviews from those students who do not seek psychiatric help?

The results are quite remarkable, I believe. For all three classes, the psychotherapy sample differs on every scale from the remainder of the class. This is true for the Impulse Expression Scale, the Vassar Developmental Scale, and both measures of authoritarianism. The direction of the difference is such that the psychotherapy sample scores higher in the senior direction. Not all of the differences for each class on each scale are statistically significant, but there is not one instance of reversal of direction, and the results are highly significant over the three classes.

If we consider that the characteristics of seniors as compared to freshmen represent some form of increased maturity, we have evidence that those students who voluntarily seek psychotherapeutic aid and stick with it are more mature than their classmates at the time of college entrance. Of course, it may be argued that this is a superficial maturity, and it may well be that part of the difficulty leading up to a decision to seek psychotherapy has to do with inability to achieve some sort of integration of various drives and attitudes of which many freshmen are not yet even aware. We are now making a study of other characteristics of these psychiatric patients, for example, of their scores on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. Such results may show that these students display more symptoms of neurosis or general psychopathology. But even if this be the case, the results I have reported demonstrate that those students who seek psychological help, far from being somehow inadequate or retarded in some emotional or personality sense, tend to be ahead of their classmates in developmental trends of late adolescence.

One effect of the foregoing results is to focus attention on development in the immediate post-college years. Students who seek psychotherapy and seniors as compared to freshmen are characterized by less of the blandness that seems to be associated with late adolescence in college women. They are more aware of themselves and their surroundings, more flexible, more open to new experience. Is this a prelude to some form of integration of the personality at a higher level of complexity? Studies of experiences in the years after graduation can provide the context which is needed for greater understanding of the developmental trends described in this paper. Let us hope that we may soon look forward to a number of studies which relate personality characteristics in the college years to subsequent events.